264 would not come willingly to work. When a family with a repu-
476 tation for stinginess diluted the (3)khaaw (3)tom too much,
[574] the group refused to eat any, thereby reminding the host of his obligation for hospitality.

574 Guests to whom meals were served fell into four categories: 1) kin, 2) visiting dignitaries, 3) priests and 4) drinking companions. Kinfolk who came as guests were married children, or those who were away at school or work, or kinsmen from Bangkok or elsewhere. The older the relative or the greater the distance travelled, the greater the honor accorded him. Foods were exchanged. Two visiting ladies travelling in a large boat, made an annual round of all their relatives, bringing certain "city" foods and receiving substantial gifts of rice, fish and fruit. They stayed for several days as guests of one family, then moved on. Every person from Bang
[430] Chan who visited a relative in Bangkok carried big packages of food, usually rice or eggs, as gifts. With the inflated prices in Bangkok, it was advantageous to have a "country cousin" who might bring food. Visiting kinsmen always recognized the need for eventual reciprocity.

Visiting dignitaries were usually entertained by hamlet headmen. Meals served to visiting officials, policemen and others might be elaborate, involving cooperative help in preparation, but reciprocity, if any, rarely took the form of a return meal.

[792] Regular visits of the priests, as well as the invitation of priests to the house for special events, have been mentioned. Priests might also come from afar, usually staying at the temple but receiving generous offerings of food from people of the community.

[562] The custom of convivial get-togethers of either or both sexes was well established. Men traditionally enjoyed "stag" dinners of four up to twenty or more whenever the ingredients for a turtle, frog, cobra or other snake curry were available. Chicken curry might also be thus served, and once a catfish mash was prepared by a male visitor from the north. Those curries were cooked by men, and the host served liquor freely.
784 The all-male character of the occasion reflected the old re-
788 strictions on women's partaking of flesh foods (see p. 42),
273 but older women did not hesitate to join in the drinking.
[524] Women also got together in drinking parties, sometimes to play cards.

In addition to sharing food with people in these four categories, the general rules of hospitality required that anyone who came to the house at meal time, should be offered food, or at least a drink of liquor, tea, or plain water.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

need. The problem is that we really do not know, although comparative data from primatology (Yerkes 1943, Kroeber 1948: 27–29 and 60–61) clearly suggest that play belongs to the former category. If this is indeed the case it would imply that play is subject to the same degree of cultural influence, channeling, and socialization as are hunger, sex, and aggression, but can no more be fully obliterated than can these needs. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that this reasoning is correct, then the compensatory "escape" and "regressive" functions attributed to play by the authors noted above would not be at all unreasonable: play might well come to serve as an escape from adult reality in the same way that food sometimes serves as an escape from sexual anxiety or sex from food anxiety (Holmberg 1950). However, the point is that these are not the primary or typical functions of these needs, but secondary and defensive ones; although significant, they hardly comprise the necessary conditions for their being. If this approach is valid, we would be considerably wiser in our present state of knowledge (the Protestant Ethic and its intellectual extensions notwithstanding) to direct our attention to identifying the varying forms of play from culture to culture rather than to dwell on its secondary, compensatory functions.

Whatever its ultimate motivational basis, there is no doubting either the spontaneity or ingenuousness with which Bang Chaners turn social situations into occasions for play. For the most part they seem prompted in these situations by the simple desire to have a good time rather than to affect others in a socially pointed way, that is, their humor is not typically aimed at being sarcastic, didactic, or even exhibitionistic, although the person who excels at being funny is quickly recognized as such and is to an extent admired.[7] There is, in the negative sense noted earlier, an element of interpersonal effect operating here: comedy is a technique which almost by definition reduces the potentiality for face-to-face conflict. However, the villagers' play seems aimed primarily at satisfying personalistic function: their *individual* needs for pleasure and amusement.

The forms that these play activities take are numerous.[8] Perhaps their

[7] In the more explicitly institutionalized forms of comedy—*likes* (folk dramatic shows) or newspaper and magazine cartoons—these aims do come into play and often assume extreme, sometimes even biting, proportions. However, this is the comparatively safe world of theatre and "literature." Among themselves, in the world of face-to-face contact, villagers are considerably more gentle (or less sophisticated) and do not focus explicitly on such purposes.

[8] We will be concerned primarily with the forms of play, not its content. For whatever reason, humor and comedy seem to be the last refuge of what is genuinely private in a culture. Intercultural translations may succeed in communicating the manifest content of another people's humor, but they so frequently miss its intent that the result is either perplexity or disappointment ("Yes, and what happens then?").

The dangers of trying to share humor interculturally were perhaps never brought home better than when I tried to get the villagers' reaction to a story that received

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

most subtle expression is in the marvelous word games that the villagers play. What is striking about these games from an analytic viewpoint is not so much that they are funny, but that villagers are continually attentive to opportunities for playing them, and actively try to structure situations along such lines. In a sense, they are not "games" at all but verbal asides that emerge spontaneously from the discourse of everyday contact, and which serve to make such contacts enjoyable. One form of word play is particularly popular. For the lack of a better term, it could be called "silent stinky pinky."[9] Here two persons are chatting, and person A works into the conversation a statement that sounds completely innocuous. (A man, for example, says to a woman, *hen mii*, meaning "see the bear.") Person B, forever attentive, knows that words are deceptive: although A *said* one thing, he was really *thinking* of, and expects B to be *thinking* of, its rhymed phonemic inversion, which is vulgar or insulting. (Although the man said to her, *hen mii*, he was really thinking of *men hii*, meaning "your vulva smells.") Person B picks up the cue and responds with a statement that sounds equally innocuous but which when mentally inverted is just as scatological. The game continues until one of the parties gives up, whereupon the conversation returns with laughter to its original concerns. It must be emphasized that although this game is phrased in terms of a verbal contest, its purpose is not to best the other person but to work out with him or her a dialogue entertaining to both.

Sometimes these games arise and die out so quickly that it is difficult even for other, nonparticipating Siamese to spot them. The particular example cited here is one that has become almost part of the folklore of conversational gambits. However, what delights many of the villagers is the unpredictability of these patterns. On one occasion, I unwittingly juxtaposed a few English phonemes that had two informants and my assistant literally rolling on the floor with laughter. We were talking about the

---

wide currency in Bangkok newspapers during 1956. It seemed that a husband was waiting outside a brothel to escort his wife, one of the prostitutes, home. She was busy with a customer. The husband called to her, telling her to hurry. She called back, saying that she would be through shortly. A few minutes later, he called again, and once more she said that she would be coming along. Finally, the husband went in and shot both his wife and her customer "because I lost my patience." When I told this story to several villagers, I was the only one who chortled. Most of them either commented on the sadness of the story or said the husband was stupid for killing the family breadwinner.

[9] In American stinky-pinky, people try to guess the rhymed equivalents of abstract definitions. Thus, if person A says, "I am thinking of a 'cadaverous Marxist,'" person B might say, "a dead red." The Thai version differs from its American cousin in that it is not only unspoken but is not really a parlor game. The tonal, monosyllabic nature of the Thai language probably is an important preconditioning factor here. (See also Haas 1951 and 1957 for illustrations of other kinds of verbal play.)

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

various kinds of ants living in Thailand and the United States. (Such are the topics that interest villagers.) The villagers wanted to know the English names for small red ants, normal black ones, and the large, rusty colored variety that are indigenous to the tropics. I named the first two with no difficulty. For the third, I said simply, "a giant ant." The assistant, turning to one of the informants, first gave the literal Thai equivalent of "giant," and then, as if this were the funniest thing he had heard that week, began to repeat, "giant, gi-ant, gi-ant." In a few seconds, they were all bursting with laughter.

Different, yet part of the same psychological constellation, is the whole complex of behaviors associated with the term, *sanug*. *Sanug* is usually translated into English simply as "fun." However, this translation conveys little of the motivational significance of the term. Essentially, *sanug* is a quality inherent in all situations which are not only fun but also emotionally worthwhile. In fact, these two states are often thought of as reciprocals of one another. An activity that is novel, diverting, or that can be done comfortably, is *sanug dii* (good fun); one that is tedious, overdemanding, that lacks the opportunity for frivolity, is not *sanug* and should be avoided. Harvesting rice in coöperative work groups, attending a ceremonial, participating in an election (see Phillips 1958: 45–46), or even taking something as outlandish as a Sentence Completion Test are all *sanug*. (The unifying elements of these diverse activities are either their novelty or the fact that they involve the presence of relatively large numbers of people but require no genuine interchange with them.) On the other hand, going into the army or working for a demanding superior are not *sanug*.

The importance of *sanug* is that it provides the villagers with a standard of value, a measure of how much they wish to commit themselves to a particular activity. The role of this standard should not be underestimated. Villagers who have taken a job in the city, often involving a time-bound daily routine or continuous, sustained attention to a task (work in a small factory, for example) frequently return to the village explaining that they quit "because it wasn't *sanug*. How can you work on a job if there is never any time for fun?" Foreign employers, with their greater concern for the job than with the person who does it and with their annoying tendency to be *cuu cii* (compulsive, fussy, exacting) are a particular target for this indictment, although this is usually based on hearsay rather than personal experience. On the other hand, villagers will often take on free of charge a major job (for example, helping a neighbor build a house) precisely because it is *sanug*. Although there are other considerations operating here—creating or repaying a personal obligation, doing a *bunkhun* ("a goodness") for a neighbor—the "sanug-ful" aspects of the task are always